

“NASA-DoD Cooperation in Space Transportation”

Statement of Dana Rohrabacher

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Today’s hearing will examine how well NASA and the Department of Defense collaborate on the development of launch vehicle technology. Our focus will also include how NASA and DoD can do a better job in encouraging the emergence of entrepreneurial space launch companies. The President’s recent announcement on space exploration begins a new chapter in the American space experience. Improving the nation’s launch capability is a critical step in achieving the President’s goal of exploring new worlds.

Early in his tenure, the President took the first step in realizing this goal by revisiting space launch policies of the 1990s. These policies drove a wedge between NASA and DoD, where DoD was limited to improving expendable launch vehicle design and development of reusable launch vehicle technology was the responsibility of NASA. Compartmentalizing launch vehicle development may well have had the unintended consequence of preventing improvements to the national launch capability. I believe the President’s renewed commitment for discovery and exploration will encourage a more cooperative spirit between NASA and DoD. As long as it is not duplicative, this new approach should work to our benefit.

NASA and DoD also must establish investment strategies that promote innovative ideas from the private sector. Purchasing launch services demonstrates a desire on the part of government to adopt market-based solutions. DoD has a long history of giving a fair shot to emerging launch providers like SpaceX. Unfortunately, NASA does not share this track record. NASA should also become zealous in its approach in supporting space entrepreneurs. Only then can we expect real process in supporting industry.

Cooperation between NASA and DoD on technology development is not new and has not always been easy. Indeed, there are plenty of examples that suggest such an undertaking is difficult at best, but there are shining examples of success as well. Let’s face it, both agencies’ approach to developing space transportation requirements derive from very different cultures and philosophies. Bridging this gap is going to take strong leadership.

As chairman, I will vigorously support joint NASA and DoD space launch initiatives that promise significant benefits to them, as well as the nation.